

Basic Principles

Supporting passengers who may require extra assistance



WELCOME to Basic

Principles which supports passengers who may require extra assistance.

These measures are to help you, which in turn help support all passengers, who may require extra assistance. This can assist with maintaining social distancing.

Drivers are already providing assistance to all our passengers every day.

Thank you for all you are doing every day to ensure an improved and safe travelling experience during these unprecedented times.

Your ongoing commitment to this is very much appreciated.

Please also read the entire Guide Dogs document and follow these key messages.



This document includes:

- 'Bus Full' sign - the importance of stopping when required
- Passengers with sight loss
- Passengers living with dementia
- Passengers with hearing loss
- Wheelchair and scooter users
- Passengers travelling with a companion and/or carer
- Helping Hand card and Sunflower Lanyard assistance schemes
- Face coverings and exemptions
- Face coverings and possible problems

We welcome any suggestions to improve the travelling experience for passengers. Please contact your supervisor who will share this with Adrian Tullett, Head of Operations, and Victoria Garcia, Accessibility Manager.

BUS FULL SIGN - THE IMPORTANCE OF STOPPING WHEN REQUIRED

- We have a legal obligation to assist disabled passengers, elderly passengers and pregnant women.
- When bus is full check with X Ray/Control for permission before adding the 'Bus Full' message on the display board.
- **Remember not everyone can read the destination display stating the bus is full.**



Therefore

- A. If the bus is full and X Ray/Control have given permission to apply the 'Bus Full' sign please continue on your route stopping only to let a passenger board when one passenger has alighted. We have an obligation to assist when the screen can't be read.
- B. **However** – it is imperative when your bus is full to stop and advise passengers listed below that you are full. This lets the passengers know they have not been ignored and another bus is coming or the taxi guarantee scheme has been instigated.

STOP TO ADVISE 'BUS FULL' FOR

1. A passenger with sight loss waiting with a guide dog and/or white stick – Important as they may not be able to read the 'Bus Full' sign as per MyGuide training.
2. A passenger holds out a Helping Hand card as a hailing card – not all passengers with sight loss have a white stick or guide dog – the company are working with Guide Dogs on this.
3. A wheelchair user is waiting – please see the wheelchair and scooter user section for taxi guarantee.
4. If you recognise someone may need assistance.

We recognise that you may not always see someone waiting among a group of passengers. We ask that you endeavour to do so as you are approaching.

We are also asking passengers to support each other at the stop to advise the sign is showing 'Bus Full'.



PASSENGERS WITH SIGHT LOSS

Maintaining social distancing for passengers with sight loss can be very difficult.

If a passenger wishes assistance navigating within the bus we have an obligation to provide assistance.

Many of the MyGuide training principles still apply although there are changes due to social distancing:

- Stop the bus to advise if your bus is full - as on page 2.
- Say 'hello' and state the bus number and destination - Remember the passenger may not be



able to read the destination on the front of the bus.

- Just like anyone else, people with sight loss will have personal references in how they receive support so ensure that you ask them what help they would like.
- If assisting a guide dog owner, do not interfere with the dog and only give instructions to its owner.



- Some passengers may need support when paying the fare. If they use a smartcard or contactless payment method, it may be difficult or impossible for them to find the scanner. Under normal circumstances, a driver may scan the card for them but given social distancing requirements you may need to give them verbal directions. e.g. 'it's to the right of your left hand and further forward'.
- People with sight loss will often have difficulty finding a seat. During the

pandemic, and when it is possible that some seats are blocked off, it will be even harder for them to do so. Please ask the passenger if they need help identifying a vacant seat that is a safe distance from other passengers.

- Please describe where the seat is – for example 'the first row of seats facing forward on the right' or, 'the seventh row of seats on your left. There is a step up just before you get there.'
- Please ensure that the passenger is seated safely before moving off.
- Bus drivers will always prioritise the safety of all their passengers, but it is essential that passengers with sight loss are able to get off the bus at the correct stop. It can be frustrating and disorientating for a passenger with sight loss to miss their bus stop but this could be even more of an issue during the pandemic where road and pavement layouts may have changed to facilitate social distancing. People may find it difficult to ask the general public for help when dropped off at an unfamiliar location.



PASSENGERS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

The following can be helpful for all passengers as well as for those living with dementia. These can make someone feel more confident and at ease when getting on and off the bus.

If a passenger presents as being confused and after offering your help you are still concerned for them, as normal contact X Ray/Control who will ensure assistance is made available.



- Be patient. Give people time to find the right method of payment when they are boarding or if they are checking route information. Patience and understanding can help people living with dementia feel comfortable and use bus services more often.
- Continue to make clear announcements when routes are disrupted or changed. Let people know what is happening, answer any queries and tell where to go to get support.
- Continue to lower the step. Use the lower step or ramp facility if you see someone who looks like they might need extra support at an approaching bus stop.
- Remember – not every disability is visible . It might not be apparent why someone is having difficulties but showing understanding will make a big difference for them.
- Take your time. Continue to give passengers time to sit down before driving off. A few extra seconds can make passengers more comfortable and help minimise injuries on your bus.
- Continue to signpost priority seating to passengers who may require that little extra help. Passengers may be carrying a Helping Hand card or wear a Sunflower Lanyard.
- Continue to be approachable and put your passengers at ease. Be friendly, make eye contact and smile when they board the bus. Some passengers are feeling more anxious following Covid-19.
- Be mindful it may take people affected by dementia and their carers slightly longer to get off the bus, especially if the bus is more crowded.
- Continue to build connections If you have regular passengers, take the opportunity to say 'hi' and connect with them. You can be a lifeline to a person with dementia who is feeling isolated.

Want to be a Dementia Friend? The Training Department can arrange this for you.

For more information go to <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk> and www.dementiafriends.org.uk



PASSENGERS WITH HEARING LOSS

People who are deaf or have hearing loss rely on visual cues such as lipreading and facial expressions to communicate. The widespread use of face coverings has made communication very difficult and has caused a great deal of anxiety for many.

It is not compulsory for a driver, when in the cab protected by the assault screen, to wear a face covering.

If a passenger boards the bus and gestures they lip read or presents a Helping Hand card stating 'please face me I lip read':

- If you are in the cab (and feel comfortable) temporarily lower your face covering so they can see your lips when speaking and say 'I will help if I can, could you please stand a little further back while we are speaking?'
- If you are out of the cab, and therefore wearing a mask, then you may lower your face covering if they are 2 metres away and you feel safe to do so. If it helps gesture the passenger towards the cab so you can close the cab door to enable you more freely to lower your face coverings. Remember, before removing your face covering, gesture you are going to do so to ensure this is what the passenger wishes you to do. Your safety, as well as the passengers safety, is paramount.

More ways you can help:

- Face the person you are talking to and speak clearly - avoid shouting and speaking too fast or unnecessarily slow.
- If someone doesn't understand you, repeat what you said or phrase it differently, use plain language.
- If you are in a noisy place, move to a quieter area, if possible.
- Use simple gestures such as pointing or waving to get someone's attention.
- Write things down - use pen and paper or text on device screens if out the cab.
- Only if they ask you to, speak to a relative or friend.

There are live speech-to-text apps available, though with varying levels of accuracy depending on background noise and speed of conversation.

Go to <https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/> for more information.



WHEELCHAIR AND SCOOTER USERS

Wheelchair and some class 2 scooters are welcome on board our buses. Scooters must be up to 1000mm length x 600mm wide and wheelchairs 700mm wide, both with a turning circle no greater than 1200mm.

- Any wheelchair user unable to board for any reason can access the taxi guarantee scheme by the driver contacting X Ray/Control.
- Scooters are not accepted in taxis and therefore aren't covered under the taxi guarantee scheme.
- If a wheelchair user is waiting at the stop and the space is already occupied by another wheelchair user - stop the bus and arrange an accessible taxi through the taxi guarantee scheme.
- If a wheelchair user is waiting at the stop and the space is occupied by a non wheelchair user - stop the bus and ask other passengers, politely but firmly, to vacate the space for the wheelchair user to board. We are required to do all that we can to ensure the wheelchair user can access the wheelchair space. If this is not at all possible then radio X Ray/Control to see if the next bus has an available space and/or if the customer prefers arrange an accessible taxi.
- When a wheelchair user is boarding - please deploy the ramp as normal and the pull down pole. Face coverings and gloves are available for all colleagues - please do use these as your safety, and that of our passengers, is paramount.



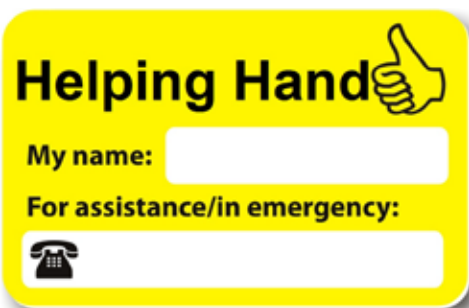
PASSENGERS TRAVELLING WITH A CARER OR COMPANION

- Some passengers will be travelling with their carer or family member. If the passenger has a carer or is travelling with a member of their own household they can sit together.
- Some passengers with a learning disability, whether adult or child, may travel more frequently with their carer or companion. There are exemptions for this. Please provide assistance if required.



HELPING HAND CARD AND THE SUNFLOWER LANYARD

Not all disabilities are visible.



- Some passengers may carry a Helping Hand card to advise that they may require assistance.
- The Helping Hand card has been designed to carry a simple message describing the type of assistance the customer may require.
- This may include requiring a priority seat - this card is one that we advise the passenger to show to another passenger.
- Other passengers may wear a yellow and green lanyard with sunflowers on it.
- There are 3 million of these lanyards in the UK as a discreet way of the passenger advising that they may require assistance.

IF A PASSENGER HAS A HELPING HAND CARD OR SUNFLOWER LANYARD PLEASE

- Lower the step
- Allow the passenger more time to scan their pass
- Offer assistance if required
- Wait until the passenger seated before pulling away

As normal, please provide the same assistance for elderly passengers or for passengers with a walking stick or walker.



FACE COVERINGS - ESSENTIAL FOR PASSENGERS WHEN USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

From June 15 all passengers are required to wear a face covering when travelling by bus. A police officer can now apply a fine for not wearing a face covering.

The wearing, or not wearing, of face coverings is **NOT** for drivers to police as this is only a matter for police officers.

Some passengers are exempt:

1. Children aged 0 to 11 years
2. Disabled passengers
3. Passengers with breathing difficulties - for example people living with asthma.
4. Other listed exemptions including emergency staff – all listed here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-rules-on-face-coverings-coming-in-on-monday-will-help-keep-passengers-safe>

Currently, a passenger **does NOT need to show proof that they are exempt from wearing a face covering**. Passengers who are exempt may let you know by:

- Showing a Disabled Concessionary Card, a Sunflower Lanyard or our own Face Covering Exemption card. Details here – www.buses.co.uk/HelpingHand
- Advising you directly they are exempt without having any of the above. Remember it is NOT your job to police this.
- If a passenger requires an exemption card ask them to:
 - visit the website at www.buses.co.uk
 - call customer services on 01273 886 200
 - email info@buses.co.uk
 - download their own at www.buses.co.uk/HelpingHand

WHAT DO I DO IF A PASSENGER COMPLAINS ANOTHER PASSENGER IS NOT WEARING A FACE COVERING?

Remember it's **NOT** your job to police the wearing of a face covering. **However** conflict avoidance is recommended in order to provide reassurance for all. Politely advise passengers that there are several exemptions to wearing one.

Some passengers have commented on another passengers not appearing to need a seat or assistance. It is imperative we support the message of 'not every disability is visible'.

We already have signs on all our buses reminding passengers of this.

Signs will be added advising:

"Please remember not everyone can wear a face covering. It's not always obvious why so please be understanding"

If there is an escalation and conflict occurs, please contact X Ray/Control as normal for further advice and support, if necessary.

OUR OBLIGATION AS PART OF THE GOV.UK GUIDANCE

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

You need to consider accessibility at every stage of the passenger journey. Passenger assistance should be a normal part of the offering that passengers can request at the point of need. Service providers have duties to ensure individuals with protected characteristics, for example disabled people, the elderly and pregnant women, are able to access transport networks. Everyone should be supported to access transport and comply with social distancing. **All equality and discrimination law continues to apply.**

Thank you to everyone who helped develop these 'Basic Principles' including Action on Hearing Loss, Alzheimer's Society, Guide Dogs and Unite Union.

Brighton & Hove

METROBUS